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ABSTRACT

This article includes reports of meetings held in Dublin, Bonn, and Strasbourg of member State representatives of the Council of Europe. The first meeting discussed problem areas relating to the access to higher education, in particular the implications of the increasing admission restrictions and the diversification of postsecondary education. Other items examined included student participation in university affairs, research into higher education, cooperation between universities in Europe, the project for a European Tele-University and the creation of the League of European Research Libraries. The aim of the second meeting was to study one of the existing national information and documentation centers working in the field of equivalence certificates, degrees, and diplomas and to draft proposals for the improvement of equivalence information and for future Council-of-Europe action concerning the mutual recognition of certificates, degrees, and diplomas. The discussion of the third meeting was concentrated upon current experiments in Europe with regard to new teaching and examination methods. Different aspects of the question were examined in 3 working groups: resistance to changes; training teachers in new methods; and connections between new teaching and assessment methods on the one hand and the organization of higher education on the other. (HS)

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Higher Education and Research

Dublin 19th - 21st May 1971

Twenty-third meeting of the Committee

The meeting was held in Dublin under the chairmanship of Mr. T. O'Raifeartaigh. It was attended by university and government representatives from twenty-one member States, together with observers from UNESCO, OECD, the European Communities, the International Association of Universities, the League of Yugoslav Universities, as well as consultant experts who reported on the progress of the Committee's work in Research into Higher Education and on the foundation of the League of European Research Libraries (LIBER).

The Committee discussed the main items of its work programme. Problem areas relating to the access to higher education, in particular the implications of the increasing *numerus clausus* and the diversification of post-secondary education, received special attention. Other items examined included student participation in university affairs, research into higher education, co-operation between universities in Europe, the project for a European Tele-University and the creation of the League of European Research Libraries.

Access to higher education

All European countries are faced with the problem of finding appropriate criteria for access to higher education. This is both a technical and an urgent political problem. However, it is not possible to implement a uniform solution for all European countries at the moment. On the one hand, *numerus clausus* may become a serious threat to the mobility of students who should, in principle, be free to study any subject of their choice if they are sufficiently qualified for it and be admitted to universities both in their own country and abroad. On the other hand, complete freedom of access to higher education cannot always be granted, as it may lead to an enormous afflux of students which would cause the whole system to collapse.

Some measures, it was felt, might contribute to solving the *numerus clausus* problems :

— Promotion of research into the ways and means of predicting the social and individual demand for higher education in future years and of determining the capacity of the existing institutions ;

— Closer co-operation between Ministries of Education, Ministries of Finance and universities in order to make sure that the available funds are spent in the most efficient way and that the existing teaching and research facilities are adequately used ;

— An improved system of pre-selection at upper secondary school level ;

— A restructuring of higher education leading to a more diversified system which would offer shorter study courses and training facilities at non-university institutions, but

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having equal social prestige, and which would provide for a greater mobility between various forms and branches of higher education ;

— Improvement of student guidance and orientation ;

— Bilateral agreements between neighbouring countries. The admission of foreign students is part of the European academic tradition and should therefore continue to be one of the essential criteria of any university in Europe. In subjects where admission is restricted *(numerus clausus)*, member States should do their best to make sure that at least a certain percentage of the available places is reserved for foreign students.

Diversification of post-secondary education

Two reports were presented to the Committee for discussion : "Policy and planning of post-secondary education — A European overview", a background study for the Seventh Conference of European Ministers of Education by Professor W. Taylor (United Kingdom) and "Development of higher education 1950-67" prepared by OECD and introduced by Mr. G. Papadopoulos (OECD).

During the debate on the two reports the Committee agreed on the following principles :

— The need for continuous expansion of post-secondary education will persist throughout the years to come. The demand can be met only if diversity and unity are recognised as the guiding principles for the organisation of post-secondary education and if new teaching and learning media including multi-media systems for learning at a distance are introduced.

— It will be necessary to define the rôle of the university in the emerging comprehensive system of post-secondary education.

— For vast sectors of post-secondary education, it will not be possible to maintain close connections between teaching and original research. The place of such research within the system of post-secondary education will therefore have to be redefined making sure, however, that there are enough institutions where this research is combined with teaching.

— The provision of post-secondary education for large parts of the population must not only be seen from the point of view of access to certain professional careers but also from the point of view of educating for leisure.

— The expansion of post-secondary education will also require rethinking of the whole pattern of society. It might otherwise result in a shortage of labour for certain manual occupations which, at present, are still essential.

— The future system of post-secondary education needs to be based on an improved system of guidance and orientation for the students.

— The demands of post-secondary education vis-à-vis secondary education will have to be analysed.

— Provision will have to be made to enable those who are already engaged in professional life to undergo recurrent education at certain intervals.

— Whenever problems of post-secondary education are discussed at international level. the Committee should be given an opportunity to express its views, being the only European body composed of both government and university representatives.

Student participation in university affairs

In reporting and commenting on experience over recent years in this field, the rapporteur, Dr. R. Natsch (Switzerland) pointed out that, although many students are genuinely

interested in the fate of the university, participation threatened to become the concern of a few "professional" radical student representatives who aim at a total revolution of society rather than university reform.

The Committee agreed that :

— A certain amount of student participation in university affairs is necessary. There must be no return to the situation as it was before 1968. The positive aspects of student participation should be encouraged, the negative ones eliminated.

— The solutions to this problem will vary from country to country, or even from university to university, and the extent of student participation will have to depend on the nature of the matters to be decided.

— Student participation in university affairs should not be allowed to degenerate into a training field for political radicalism and violence.

Co-operation between universities in Europe

The present state and the prospects of co-operation between universities in Europe were examined at the meeting. The Committee discussed in particular the proposal put forward at a 1970 Conference organised in Grenoble by the Association "Europe-Université" to create a representative body to advise the European Communities and the Council of Europe on all matters concerning higher education. The Committee welcomed conferences like the one at Grenoble as a useful forum for discussion to achieve closer European co-operation in higher education, but rejected the proposal. It made the following comments:

— There is a real need for a European authority in higher education and research, but instead of setting up new international bodies, the position of the Conference of European Ministers of Education should be strengthened, and the activities of the existing international organisations co-ordinated and better publicised.

— The main responsibility for this co-ordination lies with the national governments, but the organisations themselves should also make efforts towards closer co-operation, in particular in preparing their future work programmes.

— Although the universities cannot solve all the problems of specialisation in teaching and research and of mobility of teachers and students without the help of the governments, they should be encouraged to establish more direct contacts among themselves.

Research into higher education

Professor V. Rice (Ireland) informed the Committee of the results of two meetings : on research into higher education (November 1970) and on new teaching and examination methods in higher education (April 1971). The participants agreed that :

— Research into new teaching, learning and examination methods in higher education should always be carried out in relation to a concrete discipline. Research into higher education should closely co-operate with educational research in general and in particular with research into school education.

— For full professors, training in new methods and media should remain voluntary.

— The university should not become a "supermarket of learning", but retain its educational function.

— Criticism of society should not become an aim of higher education. The university should train students to think critically but it should also provide room for those who — with a critical mind — accept the present form of society.

Document : CCC/ESR (71) 45.

Bonn *25th - 26th March 1971*

Equivalence of certificates, degrees and diplomas

(Meeting of experts)

Representatives from fifteen member States and observers from UNESCO, the European Communities, the International Association of Universities, the Yugoslav Federal Council of Education and Culture and the League of Yugoslav Universities attended the meeting.

The aim was :

- to study one of the existing national information and documentation centres working in the field of equivalence ;
- to draft proposals for the improvement of equivalence information and for future Council of Europe action concerning the mutual recognition of certificates, degrees and diplomas.

The meeting made several recommendations :

Improvement of information

— The Council of Europe should circulate a repertory of national information and documentation centres in matters of mobility and equivalence and a list of national liaison officers for questions of equivalence of diplomas.

— Member States should be invited to communicate to the Council of Europe names and addresses of national information and documentation centres in matters of mobility and equivalence. They should also be invited to submit lists of generally recognised upper secondary school leaving certificates, of generally recognised final post-secondary qualifications, of falsified certificates and diplomas, wherever such lists have been established, lists of bilateral or multilateral equivalence arrangements and subjects with *numerus clausus* regulations. Member States, it was agreed, should assemble texts of national equivalence regulations and jurisprudence in this field. Likewise, descriptions of educational reforms leading to the introduction of new types of certificates, degrees and diplomas should be circulated.

Co-ordination of national recognition policies

— The admission of a certain number of foreign students must be an essential criterion for any university in Europe.

— Efforts should continue to be made to define minimum requirements for certain certificates, degrees and diplomas. Care should, however, be taken to make sure that such requirements do not become an obstacle to educational reform.

Future programme of the Committee for Higher Education and Research

Further action should concentrate on :

— The standardisation of computerised study records ;

— The co-ordination of national equivalence policies ;

— The implications of the increasing *numerus clausus* regulations ;

— The extension of the European Convention on the Equivalence of Periods of University Study to include subjects in addition to modern languages.

Documents : CCC/ESR (71) 34 ; 35.

Strasbourg *22nd - 23rd April 1971*

New teaching and examination methods in higher education

(Meeting of experts)

The meeting was attended by delegates from twelve member States together with observers from UNESCO, OECD, UNESCO's Institute for Education (Hamburg) and the International Institute for Educational Planning.

The discussion was concentrated upon current experiments in Europe with regard to new teaching and examination methods. Different aspects of the question were examined in three working groups : resistance to changes ; training of teachers in new methods ; connections between new teaching and assessment methods on the one hand and the organisation of higher education on the other.

Evaluation of experiments with new teaching and examination methods

Two examples of new teaching and examination methods experiments were analysed :

— construction and evaluation of a multi-media course in technical mechanics at the Technological University of Eindhoven (Netherlands) reported by Dr. W. Meuwese ;

— a similar computer assisted experiment with a multi-media course in physics at the University of Louvain (Belgium), reported by M. J.-P. Denis.

In both cases the experiments were based on the fact that the same subject can be taught in various ways and that, while some teachers are inclined to centre a course on concrete problems, others prefer theoretical teaching, still others adopting a more or less intuitive approach. With this in mind, the courses were arranged on various "tracks", enabling the student to choose the best suited to his way of thinking. In each of these "tracks", the teaching takes a variety of forms : traditional or programmed textbooks, tape-recordings, closed-circuit television, group work and practical laboratory work. The student himself decides the pace of his learning and is kept informed of his progress by means of a control system (computer-assisted and conducted written tests). The teacher by the use of these technical means, is relieved of the task of transmitting factual knowledge and can devote his time entirely to answering students' questions and giving individual tuition.

The meeting stressed that such experiments should be encouraged and widely publicised in order to stimulate similar projects. It was felt that these new methods would help to increase efficiency in higher education and to reduce the study time. More research into this matter should be carried out.

Resistance to change

After having identified areas where changes in teaching and examination methods might take place, the meeting stressed the need for an institutionalisation of research into higher education and the promotion of interdisciplinary teaching and research, as effective means to overcome resistance to change.

Training of teachers in new methods

It was felt that new methods could only be put into general use with the least of resistance, if there were a thorough reorganisation of the teaching staff, offering all university teachers (junior and senior) the opportunity to take special training courses in education. Such courses should :

- take place within each institution for higher education ;

- focus on learning theories, models and new technologies ;
- concentrate on the training of higher education staff, with regard to the construction of teaching/learning systems (e.g. units/credits based on multi-media teaching).

Connections between new teaching and assessment methods on the one hand and the organisation of higher education on the other

The following points were stressed in the discussion :

— any change in the organisation of higher education should have a tendency towards establishing comprehensive structures ;

— a clear cut distinction should be made between teaching and research in the budget ;

— changes should take place within the staff structure of higher education and incentives should be worked out to encourage innovation and experimentation ;

— any reform of structures and methods should be based on the principle of student participation.

Furthermore, the meeting made proposals concering the future programme of the Committee for Higher Education and Research in this field :

— Regular meetings of directors of national centres for research into higher education should be organised ;

— Contacts between research workers in this field should be encouraged.

Documents : CCC/ESR (71) 14 ; 16 ; 20 ; 21 ; 39.

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General and Technical Education

Brussels *24th - 26th March 1971*

Curricula for the European Schools — Study of methods developed

(Ad hoc meeting)

The methods developed by European Economic Community countries in drawing up curricula for the European Schools were studied and discussed at this meeting.

Delegates from nineteen member States listened to an account of the foundation and development of the European Schools and then concentrated their attention on the lines along which teaching is organised and the procedures and methods used to standardise curricula, summarised below :

Lines along which teaching is organised

The statute of the European Schools lays down the following principles with regard to the organisation of teaching :

— Basic education shall be provided in the four official Community languages (German,